



Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

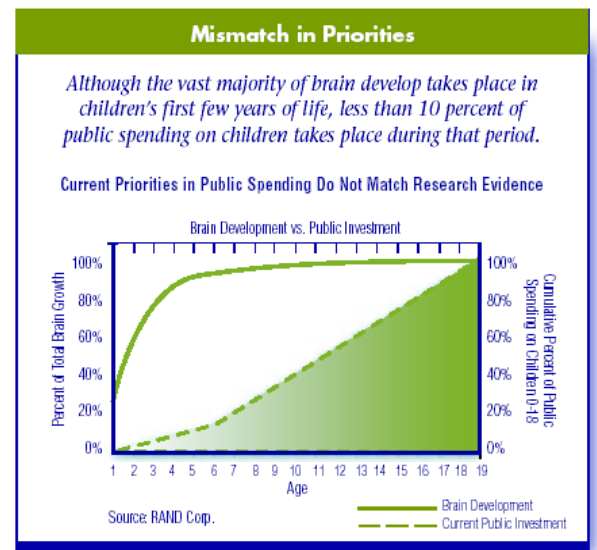
Children's Trust Fund of Washington

Maximizing Impact: Our Focus on Children Birth to Three

One of WCPCAN's greatest strengths is our clear focus on prevention. That focus sharpened recently with the decision to concentrate efforts even more on young children birth to three years old. This new emphasis on children birth to three speaks directly to the greatest opportunities and challenges in child abuse and neglect prevention. In particular, WCPCAN chose to focus on the period from birth to three because it is the time of greatest brain development in a child's life and is the period in which we can have the most impact on a child's potential.

The opportunities for impact are clear:

- Advances in research about early brain development and nurturing theory demonstrate the huge potential that exists to positively influence developmental outcomes during the critical first years.
- Parents are most willing to receive information and support during the period of critical life change represented by the birth of a first child.
- The quality and stability of a child's relationships in the first years of life lay the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes that really matter.



The challenges in protecting this population are obvious. Children from birth to age three:

- Have the highest victimization rates. In Washington State and nationally, the age group that experiences the most abuse is children under one.
- Are the most likely to experience a recurrence of maltreatment.
- Are the most likely to die from the abuse and neglect they experience. (Death by maltreatment rivals congenital anomalies as the second leading cause of death of children ages 1 – 4 in the U.S.)

Children under the age of five are very open to new learning, but they are also extremely vulnerable to harmful experiences such as abuse and neglect.

WCPCAN believes that investing in services for children birth to three and their families is an important component of making sure that all children have the opportunity to succeed in this world and that they have the best chance to grow up safe and secure.